

Looking back

Police Chief reflects on first five years in office in Duxbury

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Almost exactly five years to the date since he took office, Duxbury Police Chief Matthew Clancy sat back in his chair at the Duxbury Police Department and reflected on his tenure in town. Clancy joined the Duxbury Police Department in 2010 after spending eight years as Police Chief in Plympton and 17 years as a sergeant in Mashpee. When the opportunity arose to come to Duxbury, Clancy jumped at the chance.

“When you come from the outside as chief, you come in without any personal baggage that you could get from spending years on the force,” he said. “That fresh set of eyes allows you to be a little more objective and gives you the opportunity to take a look at what can be improved.”

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When he arrived in office he said his first course of action was to help the department heal after what he called a couple of “chaotic” years.

“My first project was to get the police department out of the newspaper for the wrong reasons,” he said. “To some extent we will have days where the past creeps in and we have to aggressively go after it. But we’ve come a long way and there’s a lot of water under that bridge now.” His next big undertaking was the plans to build a new police station. “The building we were in was deplorable,” he said. “Getting the department built was a process, as we had to go back and forth to figure out whether to build our own station or combine it with the fire department.” Clancy also sought improvement with how officers respond to burglaries. “In a big city, a burglary is like a parking ticket; it’s pretty cut and dry,” he said. “That’s not so for Duxbury. In our town that’s a major crime and we wanted to respond aggressively.”

In the past, Duxbury has teamed up with the sheriff’s department to investigate and collect evidence from burglaries. Now, the new police department has an evidence lab and three officers who are specially trained. These officers have gone through several types of training, including latent fingerprint recovery, digital photography, castings and impressions. “They each have a “go” kit with the equipment they need,” he said. “If they are on duty and a call comes in, that’s who we send. Even if they are not on duty we will send them if no one is available from the sheriff’s department.”

Clancy said the evidence lab allows the officers to spend the time needed on each and every case, which may not be the case for larger organizations who process evidence.

“Now that we can process evidence in-house, our wait time has gone down significantly,” he said.

The department also has a cyber crime lab, which is used for many different types of online crime.

“It really runs the gamut,” Clancy said. “It’s everything from spam to what we classify as child pornography.”

That child pornography Clancy referenced is more commonly known as “sexting” and there have been several incidents of it in the past several years. It involves adolescents taking pictures of themselves and having those photos sent to multiple people and posted online.

“It goes on constantly,” Clancy said. “Parents come in and call our attention to something on their kid’s phone and that ends up turning into a situation with nine or 10 other students.”

With the cyber crime lab, trained officers are able to collect evidence and download data from devices such as iPhones, laptops and gaming consoles in order to trace the data back to the original source. While some investigations have been resolved by the police, Clancy said there have been several cases where officers have spent hours collecting and analyzing evidence where nothing comes of the case.

“I can’t tell you how many cases we’ve had officers spend over 100 investigating and at the end of the day there are no results,” he said.

Looking forward, Clancy said there are some things he would like to improve upon, such as working closer with local organizations such as the Duxbury Student Union and creating a more robust junior academy at the station.

“We are also working to improve our transparency,” Clancy said. “So we are now on our second version of our updated website and we have started Twitter and Facebook accounts.”

Clancy said utilizing social media has been a positive experience for the department, as it has provided lots of feedback for the department.

“It is useful for us because we can quickly share with people what is happening and where,” he said. “It’s another feedback tool that allows people to speak with us, which is great.”

Clancy said he is proud of how much the department has been able to accomplish in the past five years and said he is looking forward to the progress it will make in the next five years.

“We have had a great few years,” he said. “I say ‘we’ because it really has been the entire department that has made it this way. It’s kind of nice to sit back and take a look at what we’ve accomplished in such a short time.”

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